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Wasserstrom, Jeff, "A Weekend Chockfull of Interesting China Events" (2008). *The China Beat Blog Archive 2008-2012*. 68.
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A Weekend Chockfull of Interesting China Events

April 21, 2008 in [Coming Distractions](#) by [The China Beat](#) | [2 comments](#)

By Jeff Wasserstrom

Seeking enlightenment on China's increasing enmeshment in the wider world, trends in Chinese media, human right issues, Chinese films, or the complexities of defining the "Han" ethnicity? If you are, and you happen to be in New York City, Los Angeles, Stanford, or Irvine, California, between April 24 and 27 and have some time to kill, you are in luck. There'll be an event going on that can answer your questions—or at least give you novel food for thought. And some will include presentations by people who've either posted to this blog in the past (yours truly, Tom Mullaney, and Nicole Barnes), or are associated with websites that we at *China Beat* find invaluable (Xiao Qiang and Jeremy Goldkorn).

China Beat has generally steered clear of promoting conferences and workshops, as there are plenty of lists out there that already do a good job of alerting people to upcoming China events. Still, during the period April 24-27 there will be so many different gatherings or presentations on themes the blog has addressed or is likely to address in the future that mention of this perfect storm of workshops and conferences seems worthy. And with any luck, if particularly interesting things take place at these events, someone from *China Beat* will blog about them (or if you go and want to post a comment about them, that would be most welcome too).

1) Closest to home (for me at least and several others at China Beat, though I'll be out of town, alas, and unable to attend), UCI political scientist Dorothy Solinger (author of important books such as [Contesting Citizenship in Urban China](#), an influential study of migrant workers) has put together a one-day April 26 workshop on a very timely topic indeed: "[Contemporary China Confronts the International Arena](#)." Speakers will include such high profile figures as Rick Baum (who along with numerous publications runs the important Chinapol listserv).

2) Meanwhile, just 50 miles or so up the freeway at USC, April 26 will see the close of a three-day event on "[Chinese Cinema at 100](#)." One thing that makes that event look special is that it combines presentations by film scholars with presentations by people working in the film industry, from actress Vivian Wu to director Li Yang.

3) For those on the other side of the U.S., a one-day event devoted to the theme of "[Defining Chinese Modernity: Information, Economy, and Environment](#)" will be held in New York City on April 25. That's where Xiao Qiang and Jeremy Goldkorn will be sharing the stage for a session on "Covering China: The Battle for the Story." See the above link for details on that and other panels (including the one I'll be on with the Asia Society's Orville Schell and Joseph Kahn of the New York Times).

4) Given how hot a topic Chinese nationalism has become (yet again), readers in Northern California may be interested in the Stanford [Han Studies Conference](#) that will take place April 25 through 27, which Nicole Barnes mentioned in [her China Beat review](#) of *Wolf Totem*. The event is being organized by Tom Mullaney and will include presentations by scholars studying Chinese ethnicity who are based in different parts of the world (China, France, Canada, Australia) and trained in varied disciplines (keynoting will be historian Mark Elliott, anthropologist Dru Gladney, and Xu Jieshun, founding director of a Guangxi-based "Han Nationalist Research Center").

5) Last but not least, for those in the sprawling megalopolis that is Southern California and who are nearer to UCLA than to Irvine or USC—or more interested in book fair settings than academic conferences, there are several authors of new China-related books speaking at the [Los Angeles](#)

Times Festival of Books taking place at UCLA April 26-27. [Pico Iyer](#), a favorite author of mine whose writings about the Dalai Lama have been mentioned before on China Beat, will be on a session taking place at 11:30 on April 26. Then on April 27 at 11:30, Lisa See, author of [Snow Flower and the Secret Fan](#) (a book that introduces foot-binding and the Taiping Uprising to young adult and adult readers), will be featured in a panel that also includes her mother Carolyn See (who has had a long and fascinating career as a prolific author, writing in many different genres). Later that same day, at 1:30, a panel on “Memoir: Other Places, Other Lives” will include Lijia Zhang. She’s a Beijing-based writer whose memoir, *Socialism is Great! A Worker’s Memoir of the New China*, was already at the top of my looking-forward-to-reading-it-list (thanks partly to the glowing blurbs by the likes of Peter Hessler, Jonathan Spence, and Pankaj Mishra, and partly to the fascinating tidbits of her life story the author shared with me when I met her in Shanghai), even before it got a [complimentary write up](#) in the *New York Times*.